NEW
NICK CARTER
WEEKLY

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No. 537 NEW YORK, APRIL 13, 1907. Price, Five Cents

ZANABAYAH, THE TERRIBLE

OR
NICK CARTER'S STRUGGLE WITH THE VITIC KING

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"

As Nick seized the extended arm, instantly there came a change in his countenance. An expression of pain swept across his face, and he found it impossible to cry out.

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ZANABAYAH, THE TERRIBLE;

OR,

Nick Carter's Struggle With the Vitic King.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A DANGER FROM THE UNKNOWN.

"*Idayah!*"

It was Nick Carter who uttered the involuntary exclamation, and it was made as the result of glancing down upon a card which his man Joseph had passed to him in silence; a card whereon was engraven the legend: "Mrs. Gerald Thackeray Starbuck. The Willows."

The detective raised his eyes inquiringly to Joseph, and the latter, as solemn as an owl, responded to the voiceless question:

"I have shown madam into the library, sir."

"All right, Joseph. I will be down at once; no; in a few minutes. Say that I will be with her presently."

But the detective made no move to carry out his statement after Joseph had left the room. Instead, he remained where he was, staring across his study at a spot of blank wall which his eyes had selected between the pictures—staring, in fact, at nothing.

For the purposes of this narrative we are permitted to read his thoughts as he sat there motionlessly thinking, for he uttered no word aloud, and there was not a change in the expression of his face to denote that his mind was more than ordinarily occupied.

But the name on the card which he had picked up from the salver and which he still held between his fingers had conjured up many things to his memory—things which the pressure of his business and the exigencies of his life had compelled him momentarily to forget.

Nor will the name Idayah be unknown to us who have followed Nick Carter through his adventures; particularly those adventures which have had to do with the names of Starbuck and Idayah.

But to return to Nick Carter's thoughts; for the detective's thoughts are always interesting, particularly so since it is his habit to compel himself to think consecutively.

Most people do their thinking in a haphazard way—disjointedly; nothing is more fatal than this habit to wise thinking. The mind should be schooled to thinking as methodically as one would talk or write.

"Idayah is here, and alone," was the beginning of that

train of thought. "At a time when I supposed that she and her husband were still traveling abroad she appears here suddenly, and without warning of any kind, at my house, at half-past eight o'clock in the morning of"—he glanced at the calendar across the room—"the tenth of June.

"Now that is rather a strange thing for Idayah to do; it is a stranger item of event that she should be in town without my knowledge. It is very strange that Starbuck, her husband, has not informed me of their expected arrival here; it is very strange that, being here in the city, he has left me for a moment unnotified of the fact and then permitted his wife to seek me out at this hour of the day without him.

"True, he might be ill; but even in that case it seems to me that he would have sent the information by a messenger and have asked me to go to him.

"No; there is plainly trouble of some kind—the trouble that I have expected ever since we brought Idayah out of her country in Nepal which is called the Sacred Valley; ever since we made our escape from that strange place on the flying-machine—the Great Dumb-bird of the dead king Tonoyah.*

"And what a galaxy of thought and memory her presence conjures up! The very sight of the card compels everything to pass in review before me as if it were done by a set of moving-pictures, so-called, thrown upon a canvas by a biograph.

"The strange death of Baron Sternfeldt at the horse show, which has never been fully explained and doubtless never will be.—The first disappearance of Starbuck.—His rescue from the wrecked hack in Jersey City.—The arrest of Idayah and her confinement in prison.—Her escape from prison.—The taking of Starbuck out of his room on the sixteenth story of the apartment-house where he lived.—His disappearance again, on the flying-machine, now the property of the United States government.—My pursuit of them to India; to Nepal; to the Sacred Valley in the Himalayas, and all the unaccountable things which happened there; the strange people from whom she is sprung.—Their terrible, almost supernatural knowledge of the laws of powers and forces that are still unknown to our scientists, save in the rudiments: of electricity; of vibration, the greatest force in the world.—The ancient temples and houses of the Sacred Valley, which should have been called the 'Silent' Valley.—Our flight from there together: Starbuck, Idayah, Chick, the servant Rondoyah, and myself; our flight across continents and seas upon the dumb-bird of the dead king.—Idayah's presentation of the great flying-machine to the government of the United States, together with all the secrets of its manufacture and operation, which other nations are not likely to discover for ages to come—unless some traitor should be prevailed upon to reveal them.

"The marriage of Starbuck and Idayah.—The really wonderful love they had, and, no doubt, still have for each other.—Their departure for a tour of the cities of the world, and the joy they felt in it.

"And last, but by no means least, the whispered words of Idayah to me just on the moment of that departure—words which troubled me for a time vaguely, but which after a time I dismissed. I think I can repeat them, word for word. Let me try.

"'I have never told you about the years of my life, Nick Carter,' she said to me. 'Once I started to do so, and you stopped me. Now, there is not time. But there are two things that I must say to you before we part this day; two things which I wish you to remember and which I hope you will act upon if ever anything which you do not understand should happen to my husband or to me.

"'Throughout all the days and months and years that I have lived I have considered that life could hold but one thing that is worthy of achievement—*happiness;* for happiness is the focusing into one result of all healthy desires.

"'As I stand here, Nick Carter, I feel that I have achieved happiness; and yet there is one cloud in the horizon of my life—one cloud which will not disintegrate and disappear.

"'It is the cloud of all that I have left behind me. Those people back there in the Sacred Valley will find a way some day to avenge themselves upon me and mine. I know it. My father ruled there, in that country, before me, and his fathers ruled there for thousands of years before his time. I was their queen—their goddess. Because I loved, I deserted them.

"'They will never forgive me for that. I know my people—or, rather, they who were my people. They will wait, wait, wait, until the time is ripe to strike, and then they will strike quickly, surely, silently, terribly.

"'The blow will come out of the ether as a thunderbolt from the sky. It may not fall upon me personally, for that would be a sorry way and method for their revenge; but it will fall just as surely as the Sacred Valley and the people who live there continue to exist. It may not come this year or next year or the year after that. It may not come in ten years. They may decide to permit me that much happiness in order that I may suffer the more when the blow shall fall.

"'But it will come. I will be stricken through those I love and who love me.

"'I will not be alone to suffer; others will be made to suffer with me, through me, and for me in order that my own agony may be the greater because I will know that I have caused it.

"'And I say to you, Nick Carter, be my friend. Be

*See No. 536 of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY, "The Empire of a Goddess," also the three numbers preceding it.

Gerald Starbuck's friend in the future, as you have been his friend in the past. Promise me, before I step aboard this vessel, that when the time comes that the blow shall have fallen, or is threatening—promise me that then you will lay your other duties aside to serve us.'

"And I promised her willingly, gladly.

"Has the blow she dreaded fallen, I wonder? Is that why she is here now, and alone? Is that why she has returned across the seas without warning and without notifying me?

"And it is two years to a day since I stood sponsor for her at that wedding which made Idayah the wife of Gerald Starbuck. Two years ago to-day—this tenth day of June."

The detective left his chair, laid aside the half-smoked cigar which had gone out while he was thinking so deeply, threw off his house-coat and donned another, and then he descended the stairs to the library, where Idayah awaited him.

She rose to receive him when he entered the room.

It was the same Idayah, as far as appearances could go, only possibly she was even more beautiful now than then.

But there were the same glorious eyes smoldering with half-hidden fires, wondrously intelligent, superlatively fine. There was the same white-blond hair; the same lithe, exquisite figure; the same grace of motion and charm of manner; the same wondrous smile, the haughty poise of her head, the beautiful teeth—the same perfectly made woman; for it would seem that nothing had been forgotten or neglected when Idayah was fashioned, and that thereafter the model had been destroyed in order that there might never be another quite so perfect.

"Nick!" she said, and held out both her hands.

"Idayah!" he replied; and grasped them, holding them tightly in his own, and gazing steadfastly into her clear eyes in order to read there, if he could, the nature of the errand that had brought her to him.

"You wonder at my being here alone—unannounced?" she asked, resuming her seat and smiling up at him, while he took a position at the mantel with his crooked elbow resting upon it.

"Yes," he replied frankly.

"You did not hasten to me when I came," she went on, still smiling. "I wonder if I could guess why you did not."

"Try," he laughed back at her.

"You were taking time to recall the past; no? You were thinking over that last conversation between us, when I told you about the one cloud in the horizon of my happiness—and you were wondering, perhaps, if that cloud had spread out around me until it shrouded the sun of my existence. Am I right?"

"Yes, Idayah. You are right. Where is Starbuck?"

"He is at 'The Mammoth.'"

"Ah! He is here, then. I mean, he is in this country. I feared——" he paused.

"You feared, because of my presence here alone that something had happened to him?" she asked quickly.

"Yes."

"Something has happened."

He nodded. He had expected this statement, therefore it did not surprise him.

"Something has been happening constantly during the last three months," she continued. "I do not know what it is, save that I know its cause—my people."

"The blow is threatening, then?"

"It is more than threatening. It has begun to fall. It falls gently at first, but none the less heavily; but it falls surely and evenly, with each moment becoming heavier and more deadly and destructive; just as those vibrations in my own country used to start so gently, and if not interrupted would ultimately destroy everything. You remember?"

"Yes," he replied. "I remember."

"You must help us, Nick," she said, leaning forward in her chair. "You must help me."

"I will," he responded. "You know that, Idayah."

CHAPTER II.

AN EMBODIED SATAN.

"Tell me all about it, Idayah," he added, after a pause. "You are a brave woman. You are not like other women. You can look grave dangers in the face, unmoved. Tell me."

"My training has been different from that of other women."

"Yes. I know."

"Before I tell you just what has happened, Nick, it will be better if I refer to other things."

"To what, for instance?"

"To your visit to the Sacred Valley. To the incidents that happened there, and to people who were there then whom you did not know, and of whom you have never heard. If I do that, you will be better able to understand all that is to follow."

"Yes," he said.

"How long were you there, Nick? From the time that you and Chick rode into the city of the Sacred Valley until we flew out of it again on the dumb-bird, how long a time was it?"

"It was very short," he replied. "Chick and I rode down the mountain in the afternoon and first part of the night. We entered through the great archway of the gate, at midnight, or very soon after it. We rode to the palace on our horses, through brilliantly-lighted avenues, but in such utter silence that is suggested that everybody in the city was dead."

"You know that you had been seen in the mountains, and that it was thought you had perished in the great snow-storm, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Go on. How long was the time that elapsed between your arrival and your departure?"

"Chick and I arrived there soon after midnight. It was, say, three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day when we came away."

"Yes. You were not there twenty-four hours."

"No." He smiled upon her. "But if I remember correctly, I was fairly active while I was there."

She nodded brightly.

"You had a tuning-fork with you," she said musingly. "With it you started the royal bells to ringing. It called the people up and out of their houses; I met you at the entrance to the palace. I conducted you to a room where we talked together for an hour or more. Then at dawn, or at sunrise, I conducted you to the roof of the palace and offered you the kingdom if you would take it. Do you remember?" She smiled whimsically.

"Yes. I remember."

"Already I had decided to fly from the Sacred Valley; from my country and my people, and to cleave only unto the man I loved."

"I know. I know."

"Later, we descended. I gave you two attendants to care for you. You left the palace. You were provided with a horse, and followed by the attendants you rode out of the city into the country, where, by accident, you encountered Starbuck, whom I had determined you should not see at all, although you had made all that terrible journey to find him."

"But why recall all that, Idayah?"

"I have a purpose in doing so, as you shall see."

"Very well."

"The information was brought to me that you two had met. I went to you——"

"You came on one of your small flying-machines."

"Yes. I went to you. The nobles had summoned you to their presence. I, fool that I was, did not know that they intended to put you to death; nor did I know till later, when Rondoyah told me about it, that they intended also to put to death the man I loved."

Nick nodded again. He saw no reason for recalling all this.

"And then," she went on, "you were overpowered by my men. You were taken in a flying-machine with Chick, back to the palace, where you would have been taken to the Nobles, and put to death, had not you and your assistant overcome the two men who had you in charge——"

"Well," said the detective, interrupting, "we did do that; and Rondoyah proved to be a splendid fellow, after all, for without the assistance he gave us it is doubtful if any of us would ever have escaped alive from that valley. Where is Rondoyah now, Idayah?"

"He is with us. One more word, and then I will get to my story."

"Well?"

"You came to us—to Starbuck and me—in the great car of my father's; in the great dumb-bird which had not been used since his death. It was the car that I had chosen to take me out of the country when I was ready to depart."

"And we came away, Idayah. We flew over lands and seas; we arrived here in due time. You gave the flying-car, with all its secrets, to the government. You satisfied me that you had had nothing to do with the crimes of which you were originally charged. You married Starbuck, and you went away. Since that time I have not seen you—and it is two years to-day. Have you, perhaps, remembered that fact?"

"Yes. Two years. They have held aloof a long time."

"Who has held aloof?"

"My people."

"And now they are attacking you?"

"The attack has begun."

"Tell me about it."

"It is to tell you about it that I am here; but, first, a few more words about my country; about the Sacred Valley."

"Well?"

"You have so often heard the 'Nobles' of my country mentioned, and yet you have never once inquired who and what they are."

"The subject has not interested me, perhaps. I don't think it has ever occurred to me to inquire about them."

"And yet they are the ones, and the only ones, who are capable of seeking revenge upon me for my desertion of them, and for the havoc we wrought when; from the air, you fired your revolver at the bell in the tower, and so started the one vibration going which would stop the flight of their machines, and leave us to escape in peace."

"I had forgotten that."

"I had not. Doubtless some of the Nobles were killed in that tumble. It was the vibration from that bell which wrecked their machines, and caused them to fall."

"But why did it not wreck our machine, as well?"

"Because when my father built it he had it made to another tone. That was his purpose, and I knew it. It was upon that knowledge that I relied to make my escape."

"I see."

"Doubtless some of the Nobles were killed in the wrecks that followed; or if they were not, they were sufficiently incensed to remember it, and to add it to my other sins against them; that of desertion, and flight."

"Well."

"It is of the Nobles that I would speak."

"Yes?"

"You saw enough of the Sacred Valley to know that we lived by different laws—I refer to what you call the natural laws—than you do here."

"Yes."

"Our scientists discovered ages ago that there are two great forces in nature—and two only. One of these is the creative force; the other is the destructive force."

"I remember," he said.

"The first of these is vitic—you call it electric. It is the source, the fountain, the secret of life; the other is vibric—you call it vibration. It is the antithesis of the other. It is the destructive power of the universe."

"You have told me all this before, Idayah."

"But not as I am telling it to you now; and it is necessary that you should understand it anew in order that you may comprehend all that I have to say to you."

"Very well."

"You have known—vaguely—that there are men of my country who continued to live indefinitely? I do not know that you believed it. I do not suppose that you have ever given the subject much thought. But it is, nevertheless, true. You have in your own history a legend of 'the fountain of eternal youth,' have you not?"

"Yes."

"Let me tell you, then, that it is a legend that is based upon a forgotten truth; a truth which has been known and practised among my people through more ages of the world than your modern history knows about. It is not the 'fountain' of eternal youth. It is the secret of continued life; in other words, the secret of life itself, *and that secret is based upon our acquaintance with the vitic force.*"

"Well?"

"I tell you this in order that you may understand when I refer to men—or, more particularly, to a man—who has lived since time as we count it, was young. He has lived, we will say, because he knew the vitic principle, and practised it. My father knew it and practised it. The Nobles of my country, one and all, knew it and practised it."

"It sounds preposterous, of course," said the detective. "In this—shall we call it an enlightened age?—in this enlightened age the history of Methuselah seems absurd."

"And yet Methuselah was as a boy in knickerbockers when compared with my father, or with at least one of the Nobles of the Sacred Valley."

"Go on, Idayah. Nothing that you can tell me about that wonderful country of yours can surprise me. I have seen enough of it to have passed the point of astonishment—even of unbelief. You would tell me that the vitic principle is the source of life; the secret of all life; that in your country that principle is understood and practised——"

"By a very few who do understand it, and who preserve the secret."

"And—shall I remind you that once you hinted to me that you yourself understood and practised it also?"

"You may remind me of it. Some day, possibly, I may tell you about myself; but not now."

"No? Well, about this one man to whom you have referred, then?"

"He was contemporaneous with my father, the king. He is living now. He is the chief among the Nobles. The power of the Nobles is as great as the powers of the king, if king there were—and I doubt not that since my flight, this man to whom I refer has assumed the reins of government, had himself proclaimed the king, and so has changed the dynasty of our ancient country."

"Well? Then why should he seek you, Idayah?"

"The powers of Jove, as related to you in mythology, are as nothing to the powers exerted by that man," she continued, without appearing to have heard his question. "My country is not, and never was, a cruel country. The people in it are kindly; they are innocent; they are tender. But always this one man among them has been the disturbing element; the one bad man, to use a phrase of your own, in that valley of gladness. He was a thorn in my father's side always; the one man who could defy the power of the king; the one man more feared by the people than the king himself."

"It is not a pleasant picture that you draw of him, Idayah."

"I will tell you about him in a moment, for it is he who attacks me now. I at least know that much. He is the devil incarnate; just as my father was the incarnation of all that is good, and noble, and just."

"And his name? The name of this embodied Satan?"

"Zanabayah; surnamed The Terrible."

"Zanabayah. I will not forget it. Zanabayah, the Terrible. It is rather a fearsome name."

"And he is a fearsome, terrible man, Nick Carter."

CHAPTER III.

ZANABAYAH, THE TERRIBLE.

"We are still a long way from the real purpose of your visit to me," suggested Nick gently.

"No; it is foremost in my thoughts. But I must approach the subject according to my own judgement, in order that you may understand me."

"Very well."

"Zanabayah, the Terrible, is a human gargoyle—an infinite horror—a living sin—an embodied Satan—a human ghoul—an awful being. Long ago when he was young, if he had a heart or a conscience, it was destroyed,

or was taken from him, leaving him only a monstrosity of creation, a living terror to all human creatures in the world.

"And he was the chief of the nobles——"

Nick interrupted her.

"I think I quite understand all that you would say in that line," he said. "We will take the rest for granted. In appearance, what is he?"

Idayah shuddered perceptibly; and when Nick raised his brows in surprise, she smiled.

"You wonder that I shudder," she said. "I fear that monstrosity of creation. I fear him. I have always feared him. I think my father feared him, for he seemed to have gone deeper into the sciences than any others of my country ever did."

"In appearance what is he?" repeated the detective.

"In appearance—he may be almost what he wills himself to be."

"Oh, come now, Idayah, that is going a little too far, even with me, and with this subject. I am willing to believe your statement that the vitic force which is the secret of life is known to you and to your people in that strange land, and that because of that knowledge they are—or, rather, individuals, among them are capable of prolonging their lives indefinitely; but that one among them—this Zanabayah—can have called down upon himself the mythical powers of Jove, and thus be permitted to change his shape, I frankly do not believe."

"I do not say that he changes his shape, although I suspect that he does even that; but I do say that he changes his appearance so that if you know him to-day you may not know him to-morrow; so that if you encounter him now, you may not recognize him when you next see him, even though only a few moments have elapsed. But whether his power to change himself is the result of supernatural power, or if it is the consequence of consummate art, I cannot say."

"Well, that is better. I myself have some accomplishments like that—so it has been said. We call it here the art of disguise."

"I know what you mean. But the method and the talent of Zanabayah goes farther than that. If it is an art or a talent, it is supreme almost."

"And yet all this brings me back to my question, Idayah."

"What was it?"

"In appearance, what is this Zanabayah?"

"How shall I tell you, after all that I have said?"

"Tell me as you know him best. Tell me how he looks when he appears among the Nobles."

"Ah! I can do that."

"Well?"

"He is different from our people, in that his hair is like the wing of a raven. It is like the coal that you burn in your furnaces—how strange to burn up the earth which is your support, and destroy it for the sake of warmth, when in the air around you is that indestructible electric impulse which would give you warmth and life without losing anything of its bulk!"

"Never mind all that just now. Go on."

"He is tall, and dark, and sinister, and handsome. He is as graceful as a panther, and as sly. He is as sleek as a tiger, and as relentless. He is as soft as a dove, and as unreliable. He is as gentle as a doe, and as evasive."

"That is as he last appeared to you?"

"That is as he is. But he may appear before you in the form of a decrepit old man, dying of age, and at the same time the strength of giants will repose in his muscles, the quickness of motion of a cat in his nerves. Or he may appear as a beautiful woman, with dark and luminous eyes, with the manner of a siren, and the heart of a fiend. Or he may——"

"In short, there is no end to the disguises that he can assume at will. Is that what you mean?"

"Yes; if you insist upon applying that word. But in his case it is something more perfect than mere disguise. It is the assumption of character. It is an utter change. There is apparently nothing that will rub off or that can be removed to reveal the true identity that is behind it all. It is as if the life that is in him stepped out temporarily from the body it has inhabited and assumed another for its uses. It is, in short, as you suggested a little bit ago, the assumption of the powers of Jove, who could change himself into a lion, or a mouse, a toad or a serpent, a giant or a pigmy, a worm or an elephant, at will."

"Only Jove had the talent of changing others, as well. I suppose Zanabayah could not do that."

"No; I have never heard that he could do that."

"Then we will take courage, for at least there is one limitation to his powers."

"It would seem to me, who know him, that there is no limitation to the power of Zanabayah, the Terrible."

"And now, to get down to modern history. You are in danger?"

"Yes—and no."

"Your husband is in danger?"

"We are all in danger—danger that is imminent and which yet may not fall upon us for a long time to come. My husband is in danger. I am in danger. My child is in——"

"Your child!"

"You did not know. I have a son one year old. I have named him Tonoyah, for my father, the king."

"By Jove, that's fine! And you never sent me word! I should be angry with you for that neglect."

"He is a beautiful child, Nick. My happiness seemed fulfilled when he came. My beautiful boy! It is for him that I mostly greatly fear."

"Naturally."

"But as I was saying—we are in constant danger; so are you."

"I?"

"You, and your assistant. All who have visited, or who know about the Sacred Valley. All who have the misfortune to know me, or to be known, and thought well of by me. It is through me that the danger lies. It is through me that all will be made to suffer—and through them that the exquisite suffering that is to be meted out to me will fall."

"How do you know that this danger exists?"

"It has always existed since I fled from the Sacred Valley."

"But how do you know that it is present now?"

"I have seen Zanabayah!"

"You have—*seen* him!"

"Yes."

"When?"

"In London, a few weeks after the birth of my son. Again, in Paris, six months ago. Again, in London, just before we sailed for home. Again, on board the ship that brought us over. Again, when we came ashore. Again, this very morning."

"Where—this morning?"

"On the street; through the window of my room."

"And how did he appear? In the form that you have described to me?"

"Yes."

"Each of these times?"

"No; but three of them—yes."

"How were you sure on the other occasion, that the man you saw was Zanabayah?"

"He made me assured of it."

"How?"

"By smiles. By signals. By nods. By threats. By our sign-talk. In many ways."

"You are positive that there has been no mistake?"

"Yes."

"What has he done other than to appear to you?"

"Nothing. That is——"

"Well?"

"He has made me know that he was near at other times when I have not seen him."

"How? In what manner?"

"Once by a poisoned dart, such as are made only in my country, as you know. I found it lying upon the pillow beside the cheek of my sleeping son. The point was toward him. Had he turned his head it would have pricked him."

"And, again——"

"A heart-shaped emerald which he owned and wore in the Sacred Valley, is now among my jewels. I discovered it in my jewel-box—and the jewel-box was locked in the safe in the hotel, and itself locked, as well."

"A strange sort of message to send to you; an invaluable emerald."

"Bah! It's value to him is nothing. He merely remembered that it would assure me of his nearness."

"And, again——"

"Notes, written in the language of my country, handed to me by servants, where we have been staying—by a thousand and one signs that he knows so well how to make; that he knew so well would fill me with dread."

"And what did those notes impart to you? What was written upon them?"

"Such expressions as, 'I am near you'; 'I am watching over you'; 'Zanabayah, your guardian, is at hand'; and others of no more importance. They were all warnings only—subtle warnings, mysterious harbingers of my impending suffering."

"You say you saw him on board the ship which brought you over. How was that? Was he a passenger?"

"Not a listed passenger."

"Where did you see him, then?"

"On the deck. I was seated there, reading. I turned about, feeling the eyes of some person upon me. The eyes were his own baleful ones."

"What happened then? What did you do?"

"Nothing."

"Did you not attempt to speak to him?"

"No."

"Have you never, at any of the times you have seen him, made the attempt to speak to him?"

"No."

"Did you see him more than once aboard the ship?"

"Twice."

"Did you make inquiries among the passengers, and of the chief-steward, to know if he was a passenger?"

"I searched the lists. I searched among the passengers. He was not among them—that is, not there in his own proper person."

"But you think, do you not, that he was there, for all that, as one of the regular passengers, only that he was traveling in disguise? In a disguise which he laid aside for a moment or two at a time in order to appear to you?"

"Yes."

"And this morning you saw him again through your window; what was he doing then?"

"He was looking up at me, with that evil smile on his handsome face. Nothing more."

CHAPTER IV.

MEETING THE FIEND FACE TO FACE.

"Have you told your husband about these things?" asked the detective presently.

"Yes."

"When?"

"Not until Zanabayah appeared to me aboard the ship. It was Gerald who made the inquiries among the passengers for me."

"And what does Starbuck say about all this?"

"What would he say? You know him. He fears nothing. He laughs at my fears. He is only anxious for the child, but even that anxiety is tempered by his unbelief."

"His unbelief? How is that? What do you mean?"

"He thinks that I have imagined it all."

"And is not that possible, Idayah?"

"You who know me so well, Nick Carter, should not find it necessary to ask that question."

"I admit it. You are not one who is given to useless fears."

"Not at all."

"Where is Starbuck now?"

"At our rooms in the hotel."

"What hotel?"

"The Mammoth."

"Why was word not sent to me announcing your arrival?"

"I volunteered to bring the message myself. Besides, I wished to see you first, here in your own house, that I might tell you all about my fears; all about the things I have told you. Do you realize what I wish to do, Nick?"

"No; I don't think I do—quite."

"I wish to meet Zanabayah half-way."

"To attack him without waiting for him to attack you?"

"Yes."

"To pit your own powers against his?"

"Yes."

"I don't think it is at all a bad idea. It will, at least, draw his fire before he is prepared to deliver it. If we only had some tangible thing to go by——"

"There will never be a tangible thing to go by in this struggle with Zanabayah. It will always be intangible. He will always be intangible, unless you, by that great talent of yours, can force him out into the open, where we can battle on even ground."

"There is something in that."

"It is the only way. His powers, although they appear to be supernatural, are only natural, after all. Armed as you are with information that will avail you—I mean, with some understanding of the possibilities of such a man as he is—you may contend with him and against him as no one else could do it."

"Idayah," said the detective, after a short pause, during which he thought deeply, "have you any idea as to where and how he will attempt to strike first?"

"No more than you have, Nick, save that it will probably be through my child."

"Or your husband. Have you thought of that?"

"Yes."

"And what do you suppose he will attempt to do? Is it your idea that he will steal your son and carry him back to the Sacred Valley?"

"Not at all. He will do nothing so simple as that."

"Well, it may appear simple to you, but it does not to me. I remember that once I had to journey there overland, and I remember what it cost me in time, and patience, and effort. I should not like to have to do it again."

"You forget one thing."

"What is that?"

"That in Washington is the great dumb-bird, which we could borrow again, if we wished. Zanabayah knows of that—only he does not know where it is. I think he has sought it, but has been unable to get a trace of it. I think that possibly he is waiting in his efforts against me more to discover the secret of the hiding-place of the flying-machine, than for any other purpose."

"To take it back with him?"

"Yes."

"And you think that because he knows that you have that hidden away somewhere, and could pursue him, that he will not attempt to steal your child and carry him to the Sacred Valley? Is that the reason, do you think?"

"Yes. But there is another."

"Well?"

"If I should go back there, I could make it dangerous for him. I have followers there still, notwithstanding what has happened. My people loved my father. They loved me. And, besides——"

"Well, what beside?"

"No simple form of revenge such as that would satisfy a fiend like Zanabayah. To kill my husband or my child, or even me, would mean nothing. He wishes to make me suffer continued agony."

"Well? Wouldn't such a thing——"

"No; not as he views the subject. If he could visit some great calamity upon me, which would remain with me day by day, and from which I could not escape—then he would strike."

"Such as—what?"

"Alas, I do not know. If I did know, I would prepare for it. But it is the uncertainty. And he knows that I feel it. Even that is a part and parcel with his plans."

"This waiting around near you; this constant sending of warnings. This continued knowledge that you have of his presence, and that at any moment he may strike?"

"Yes."

"I think he will attempt abduction, Idayah."

"No. If he had thought of that, he would have done it long ago. It will be something that is infinitely worse than that."

"But you must have some idea, Idayah. Tell me what it is."

"I have told you already that Zanabayah is more deeply versed in the sciences of our land than even my father was. Out of the vitic, or electric, force, many strange things are made. For want of a better term you would class them with drugs—just as we class coal-tar preparations, which are not drugs."

"Well?"

"Suppose that I should find suddenly that my husband was turned imbecile? Suppose that I should return to the hotel now to discover that my child is changed somehow? Suppose——"

"But what is the use in supposing all that?"

"It is such a thing as one of those might be, that I fear the most."

"It might happen to you, yourself."

"No; for the loss of reason on my own part would relieve me of suffering. He wishes me to suffer."

"It seems to me that you are unnecessarily borrowing trouble."

"If you knew—as I know—you would not say that. But get your hat and come with me. The walk to the hotel will do me good. Come with me to see Gerald and my son."

"Indeed I will."

A few minutes later they left the house together and strolled up the avenue. Half an hour later they entered the great hotel, and were carried up in the elevator.

But as they stepped out of it at the tenth floor, Idayah suddenly grasped Nick's arm, and then, with a quick exclamation, she darted forward toward a man who was at that instant stepping from one of the rooms into the corridor.

He saw her as she started toward him, and paused. She halted, also, facing him, and for an instant the two stood there looking upon each other without moving, as if each were measuring the power of the other.

The stranger was smiling; Idayah's face could not be seen by the detective, since her back was toward him; but he stepped quickly forward to her side.

The man held his ground. About him there was an appearance of easy familiarity, and as Nick joined Idayah and stood beside her, Zanabayah bowed low to both.

"I greet you, goddess," he said, in a voice that was low and musical, but which, nevertheless, had a touch of irony in its depths. I have just been paying my respects to your good husband. I am sorry to say that I find him not in the best of humors.

"And you, sir"—he addressed himself directly to the detective, smiling and showing his gleaming teeth in a curiously wolfish manner—"I think that you are not a stranger to me. I give you greeting, also."

"I have no recollection of acquaintance with you," replied Nick coldly, at a loss what to do under the circumstances of the meeting.

"Had you ventured to come to me at the time I sent for you, when last we were in the same country, at the same time, you would, if you were still living, have had cause to remember me."

"Possibly," replied the detective.

Idayah still stood silently beside Nick, facing the stranger, if stranger he might be called; but now she spoke; and there was no fear in her eyes, for Idayah never manifested fear in any form. Her training had been adverse to that.

"Wait here," she said, addressing the words to the detective. "Do not let him go—yet."

She glided past them then, and passed through the door into the room beyond, and another icy smile passed across the countenance of the saturnine man who faced Nick in the corridor.

"You would not venture to try to detain me if I chose to depart?" he asked, and there was ironical impertinence in the way he said it.

"I might," replied Nick coolly. "At least, I have something to say to you."

The man bowed smilingly.

"You are Zanabayah, I suppose?" asked the detective.

"Surnamed The Terrible. You have guessed it, Mr. Carter."

"Idayah has informed me that you have been annoying her."

"I am unconscious of it, sir."

"You have entered her rooms in her absence. You have left notes lying about, to her discomfort. You have sent notes to her by servants, thus casting reflections upon her. You have done other things which come under the head of annoyance."

"Well—and if I have?"

"You will discontinue them; that is all."

The man smiled again. There was something hateful, and terrible, also, in his smile. It suggested the ravenousness of a wild beast. It suggested cruelties undreamed of. It suggested blood-loving and fearsome things which would have made the detective shudder had he been less concerned in the interview itself.

"Mr. Carter," said the man coldly, but incisively, "we are standing together in the public corridor of a hotel. We are alone. You are barring my way to the elevator. Before I command you to stand aside for me to pass, I have something to say to you."

Nick shrugged his shoulders.

"Well?" he said. "What is it?"

"You will do well to attend to matters which concern you alone, personally, and to leave me and my conduct out of your surmises. I am a stranger in your country, but even now——"

What he would have said was interrupted by a loud

cry from the interior of the room. It was in Idayah's voice, and a cruel smile again crossed the face of the man who confronted Nick; and as the detective started forward in response to the call for help from Idayah, he sought to pass the detective.

"I will go," he said.

"You will do nothing of the sort. You will come with me," replied the detective coolly.

CHAPTER V.

NICK CARTER RECEIVES A SHOCK.

The cry from the interior of the room was not repeated. Instead, the two men standing outside in the hall, facing each other, could hear voices in conversation beyond the door, and Nick, having no doubt that all danger, if there had, indeed, been any at all, was passed, did not hasten his steps.

He had made no effort to attack the man who stood before him, but, remaining as he was, he opposed his passage toward the elevator.

An observer would have said that they were eyeing each other; measuring each other's strength and prowess.

Perhaps this was so. If it was, Nick saw nothing in the appearance of the man in front of him to indicate that he would be any match at all for his own great strength; nor, possibly, did Zanabayah guess at the resources of the detective.

It was he, however, who spoke first.

"I think you will find that you are needed inside that room, Mr. Carter," he said coldly.

"You will go there with me," replied Nick.

"My way lies in the opposite direction."

"Just now," said Nick, "it does not. Your way lies—there," and he pointed past the man, toward the door of the room.

Zanabayah shrugged his shoulders. He seemed to take a quick step forward toward the detective; and the latter shot out his hand and seized the arm which was extended across his own breast.

The action of that moment by the detective was so astounding that for a moment it stood perfectly still, with his hand still upon that outstretched arm; with his fingers just grasping it.

For it was exactly as if he had seized upon the iron rail of a fence; as if he had grasped in his fingers a substance of metal which was made fast to something at either end, and hence could not give or move beneath his touch.

The thing was astounding, that is one speaking.

Absolutely there was no response whatever in the arm to his grasp.

It was as hard as if it had been [illegible]; as hard to the touch; as [illegible] as [illegible].

Nor could he move it when he applied his strength to the effort.

The arm remained exactly as Zanabayah had thrust it out to meet his own attack, and what was even stranger still, the man seemed to hold it there with no effort at all.

Again Nick tugged at it; again it resisted his efforts; and he dropped it and stepped back a pace, wondering what manner of man this could be, so slight in appearance, so youthful—for he did not seem to be past thirty—and yet with such wonderful strength that, with no effort whatever, he could withstand all the effort that Nick Carter could bring to bear against him in that grasp he had put upon his arm.

As Nick stepped back, Zanabayah permitted his arm to fall to his side; listlessly, almost; indifferently, certainly.

A smile of derision curled the corners of his mouth. He bowed slightly, but he said no word; and then he stepped forward, past Nick, and walked slowly toward the elevator.

But Nick Carter had recovered himself by this time.

He turned and sprang after Zanabayah, and would have seized upon him again had not the other turned quickly and faced him.

"Stop!" he commanded, in that low, even voice of his, which somehow sent a chill across the nerves of whosoever heard him use it.

And Nick stopped. He could not have told why he did so had he been asked, save that there seemed no reason to proceed with the attack he had intended since the man was standing in front of him, within easy reach.

"If you touch me now," said Zanabayah coldly, "you will do so at your own peril. I warn you. Take my advice and follow the goddess into that room. She has need of you there, for she is in danger."

He seemed about to turn away a second time, but Nick was resolved to prevent that; and notwithstanding the plain warning he had received, he reached out again, and once more seized upon the extended arm of the man from the Sacred Valley.

Instantly there was a change in Nick Carter's countenance. An expression of pain swept across it—of agony, almost. His lips parted. It seemed as if he would cry out, only he did not do so.

But great beads of sweat formed upon his brow; his eyes bulged out as if he were under a great physical strain, which was almost more than he could bear, and his form became as rigid as Zanabayah's had been that first time when the detective had seized upon him.

The evil smile upon the countenance of the stranger deepened. His white teeth gleamed savagely between his lips, and in a low tone he said:

"This will serve to teach you that I am not one who can be molested with impunity."

Coolly he raised one hand, and disengaged the grasp

which Nick Carter's fingers had sustained upon his arm. Then he stepped backward a pace, and stopped, smiling the more.

And Nick Carter remained where he had left him and in the attitude he had assumed when he seized upon the arm of that embodied fiend.

He stood exactly as Zanabayah left him, his right arm extended, one foot a trifle forward of the other—and that was doubtless what balanced him so perfectly—his head thrown a little backward, for he had been about to say something when the paralyzing shock came upon him.

If his eyes saw anything there was no expression in them to tell of it, save that one of pain that had appeared in them at the instant of contact.

Again the white teeth of the stranger gleamed between his lips; again he turned toward the elevator, and this time he did not pause; but ringing for it, he stepped upon it when it came, and disappeared down the shaft with it.

And Nick Carter still stood where he had left him. His right arm was still extended, but his fingers grasped nothing but the empty air.

It was exactly as if he had been changed to stone; and the minutes ticked themselves away into the past, without change in him.

It was strange that nobody happened along that corridor of the hotel during that time; but nobody did come, not even a hall-boy on one of his errands; and at last a heavy sigh escaped Nick, and the extended arm sagged slowly downward until it hung at his side like its companion.

Then slowly circulation seemed to return to his veins and arteries. Slowly the color came again into his face, and at last he moved.

Then he sighed again; and then suddenly he pulled himself together with a jerk.

He crossed the floor of the corridor weakly, and for a moment leaned against the wall, as if he had not the strength to stand upright without aid.

After that only a few moments passed before he felt that he was himself again; but he looked around him in a dazed sort of manner, nevertheless, as if he expected to see his late enemy within striking distance, and it is safe to say that if Zanabayah had been there just then Nick Carter would have shot him without mercy.

"I have heard of electric eels and electric fishes," he said, half-aloud, "but this is my first experience in touching an electric man. I might about as well have touched the third rail of the subway, or picked up as a plaything the execution-wire at Sing Sing."

But it had been an electric shock that the detective had received; a shock that had paralyzed him; which had rendered him incapable of motion; which seemed, while he endured it, as if it had killed him.

Now it had passed. Only the tingling of it remained to tell him what he had passed through; and he turned toward the door of Idayah's room, remembering that he had been called, and was wanted inside.

He wondered, too, as he approached it, why she had not returned to see what had become of him. He remembered that she had told him to wait, and had asked him not to permit the man to leave.

He smiled grimly as he placed his hand upon the door, and then withdrew it to rap upon the panel.

He waited, but there was no response, and he rapped again.

Still there was no response and he repeated the summons a third time.

He was thoroughly puzzled when he received no answer to the third rap, and disdaining further ceremony, he turned the knob of the door, and sought to enter the room.

But the door resisted. It was locked.

Once more he rapped, this time loudly; yet not so loudly as to alarm others who might hear him, for he did not wish to call unnecessary attention to that room.

But even now there came no reply, and he tried the door again.

It resisted as it had done before. Plainly, it was locked on the inside, and as plainly, it was evident either that there was no one inside the room to hear, or if there was, that there was no one inside to choose to respond to his summons.

And yet, he told himself, he had seen Idayah enter that room only a few moments ago. Since she entered it, no one had come out of it; but more than that, since she entered it she had cried out to him for help, and also he had plainly heard voices proceeding from there.

There was no longer any sign of hesitation about his actions.

He rattled upon the door-knob; nobody replied.

He stooped down and attempted to look through the key-hole; but only to discover that the key was in the lock and had been turned from the inside.

Among his possessions that he carried in his pocket was a burglar's forceps, with which to turn a key from the wrong side of a door; he drew it out, and applied it to the key-post, turning it instantly, and plainly hearing the tumblers of the lock as they fell back.

Still, however, the door resisted his efforts to open it. It had been bolted, as well as locked, on the inside—and still that deathlike silence continued beyond it.

The detective was now plainly alarmed.

He studied the door for a moment, wondering if he could break it down; but it was of oak, heavy, and would likely resist every effort he could make against it.

Then he recalled something that he knew. This was the door to a suite with which he was familiar. He had been inside those rooms before, and the door toward his left, on the corridor, should open into one of the bedrooms of the suite.

"That one may not be bolted on the inside," he thought aloud; and he hastened to it.

It was locked as the other had been, only when he had turned the key, it opened easily, for it had not been also bolted.

He threw it open and entered; then he paused long enough to close it behind him.

He listened, but he could hear no sound, and fearful now that some dreadful tragedy had occurred, he sprang toward the connecting door between the rooms and threw it open.

There, on the threshold, he paused, and stood staring.

Then he rubbed his eyes and looked again; and then he called out softly:

"Idayah! Starbuck! Idayah!!"

For they were both there!

They seemed, indeed, to be looking toward him as if they saw him standing at the threshold between the rooms.

They did not seem to be dead—and yet they did not move.

They only sat there, facing toward him, and stared and stared and stared until a creepy sensation stole over him.

Beyond them, in a small chair so that its little feet could reach the floor, the baby was seated, also staring at him with that motionless, expressionless gaze that was so disconcerting.

And Nick stepped quickly forward toward them, wondering what had happened.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WORK OF A HUMAN DEVIL.

The detective approached Idayah first, for she was the nearest to him.

He bent forward and looked into her eyes; there was no answering expression there to his own, and yet he had a feeling that she saw him; knew that he was there.

He touched her head and touched hers. It was yet warm to the touch. He did not believe that she was dead. There was no look of death about her; and, besides, he remembered how he had stood out there in the hall, only a little while ago, incapable of motion because of the seeming magic of that fiend who had shocked him.

He touched her upon the forehead. He raised one of her hands in his own, and then dropped it. It fell back into position again, naturally.

"Idayah," he said to her in a low tone; and he fancied that there was an imperceptible effort on her part to respond to his appeal.

He left her and crossed over to the child, and here he took the small body in his arms and raised it from its chair. And here he was gratified to feel a responsive movement to his touch, although it was so faint as to be scarcely noticeable.

"Tonoyah?" he whispered, remembering that the mother had told him she had named the boy for her father, the dead king.

The little round eyes turned toward him. They looked at him. Then, slowly, a smile dawned upon the face of the child. A shudder passed through the small body, and it straightened itself in the detective's grasp.

Then the child yawned, as naturally and as unreservedly as only a baby can yawn; and it nestled down against him and closed its tired eyes, which had been open and staring at him a moment before.

He carried it into the adjoining room, where he had seen a crib; and he placed it there and drew a cover over it, although the day was warm.

For a moment he gazed down upon it, but the child seemed to be sleeping gently, and he left it and returned to the other room.

This time he approached Starbuck; but Starbuck was as rigid as a cane.

Unlike the others, he seemed to have been turned to stone, for his flesh was cold and hard, and for a moment the detective thought he was dead.

But he could see that a flush was slowly creeping toward Starbuck's brow, and that he was coming out of the trance into which he had been thrown; and, leaving him so, Nick turned again toward Idayah.

Her cheeks were flushed, also, now, and the lids of her eyes were winking.

He remembered that when he had raised the child from its chair and so altered its position, it had responded instantly, and now, without hesitation, he bent down, and, putting his arms around Idayah, he raised her as easily as he had done the child.

And the effect was almost the same.

She nestled against his shoulder as the child had done. She closed her eyes, too.

But Nick shook her insistently.

"Wake up, Idayah," he said sternly. "Pull yourself together if you can."

She sighed and tried to slip from his arms, and he put her back upon the chair.

Then, for a moment, she leaned back against the cushions, with closed eyes; but after a little she opened them again, and smiled up at him.

"Can you talk now, Idayah?" asked the detective.

She shook her head slowly in reply.

"Can you understand what I say to you?"

She nodded.

"Have you been poisoned?"

Her head moved in negation.

"Try to talk to me. This thing is getting monotonous. And that devil got away from me, too, in spite of all I could do to detain him. He has the strength of a hun-

fred men in those arms of his, and he succeeded in paralyzing me as he must have done with you. But, no, I heard you going about and talking—and, besides, he did not see you again after you passed him to enter this room. Was anybody here other than your husband and the child?"

"No," she whispered. Her voice was coming back to her.

"Can you get upon your feet?" he asked of her.

She nodded.

"Help me. I will try," she whispered. And he raised her again from the chair and stood her upon her feet, holding her there for a moment until she established her equilibrium.

Nick cast one glance in the direction of Starbuck, but he remained as he had been, save that the flush upon his face had deepened.

And now Idayah spoke; slowly, to be sure, but carefully, as if she were weighing her words.

"Nick," she whispered, "I have heard you say that in your business here, you always carry handcuffs in your pockets. Is that true?"

"Yes," he replied, wondering what in the world could have induced her to ask such a question as that.

"Have you some with you?" she asked again.

"Yes," he said. "What in the world——"

"Two pairs, Nick?"

"Yes. Have you taken leave of your senses, Idayah? What in the world do you want with handcuffs?"

"Quick!" she breathed. "There is little time to lose. Use them on Starbuck. Use them on Gerald—if you would save him and all of us."

"My dear Iday——"

"Quick, Nick! I beseech you. I will explain. If he should use the use of his muscles he will kill us all. Quick!"

There was something in her manner that compelled obedience; there was another reason for hasty action, too, for at that instant a sullen growl came from the chair where Starbuck was seated, and the sound of it was so ominous and fierce that Nick turned without another word and leaped toward him.

He was only just in time.

Already the gigantic figure of Starbuck—for he was a very large man—was moving about strangely, as if he were making a violent effort to resume the command of his long muscles; and as Nick approached him, the glare in his eyes, and the savage snarl upon his lips told only too plainly that he was not himself.

The hint came to Nick then that it was this condition that had caused Idayah to cry out for help when she entered the room alone; that Zanabayah had served the opium with one of his ghastly tricks, and that it would be [illegible] at a time, at best; so she [illegible] had asked him to do.

With as much deftness as ever he had put irons upon a criminal, Nick snapped the handcuffs upon Starbuck, wrist and ankle; and then, hooking a third pair through those upon his wrists, he snapped them fast to the arm of the chair, so that Starbuck could not rise if he tried to do so.

And while he did it, Starbuck glared at him as if murder was in his heart, as indeed Nick had no doubt now it was.

But what had happened—what could have happened to madden the man in this way?

With the instant that Starbuck was made secure, all the power seemed to return to his massive muscles.

He struggled and writhed in the confinement of the irons. He cursed and swore, as he had never done before during all the years since Nick had known him; and Nick stood there in almost stupefied amazement, listening to him, and scarce believing the evidences of his own senses.

But, after a moment, he felt a light touch upon his arm, and, turning, he saw that Idayah was beside him; he saw, also, that during the interval she had been into the adjoining room to look after the welfare of the child.

"Can he break them?" she asked nervously—and it was the first time that Nick had ever known her to tremble.

"The irons? No; not if he were three times stronger than he is."

"Can he break loose from the chair?"

"I do not think so. What is the meaning of all this, Idayah? Has my old friend suddenly gone mad?"

"Yes. We will call it that—for the present. He is Zanabayah's victim. That is all. Are you quite sure that he cannot escape?"

"Yes."

"Then follow me into the next room. Come, please."

There was sufficient reason why she should make such a request, for during the short conversation Starbuck had kept up an incessant cursing and snarling, as if he were a wild beast which was possessed of the gift of speech.

Nick approached him before following Idayah into the next room, and for a moment he remained looking down upon the writhing man.

"Stop, Starbuck!" he commanded, then. "I am your friend, and you know it. I am still your friend, for I believe that you are now possessed of some devil which I understand nothing about. But if you can understand what I say to you, I promise you that I *will* know about it, and *that*, with as little delay as possible. And, through all that may happen, I will stand your friend, and your wife's friend, and your son's friend."

He was answered by curses; and yet he thought there was a look of infinite relief for one instant in the man's eyes.

But without another word Nick turned and followed

Idayah into the adjoining room, where she closed and locked the door.

"Now, what does it mean?" demanded the detective.

"You spoke truly but now when you said that Gerald is possessed of a devil," she replied. "Zanabayah was here long enough to put the devil in him, and but for my readiness when I entered, he would have killed or maimed his own child, in his rage."

"Idayah, what are you saying?"

"It is only too true. He cannot help it. It is the result of the magic that Zanabayah so well knows how to practise."

"Was he all right when you left him to go to my house this morning?"

"Perfectly."

"And when you passed us—that monster and I—out there in the hall; when you passed us in order to enter this room, was Gerald all right then?"

"No. He was as you see him now, only that he was free, and he had the use of his arms. Oh, it was horrible. But I knew instantly what was the matter——"

"Then I wish you would tell me, for I have no idea what was or is the matter."

"Zanabayah has crazed him with the desire to kill and maim. I will tell you all about it another time. There is not time now, for we must do something. Where can we take him?"

"But wait! That paralysis, from which you were all suffering—even the baby. I thought, when I first entered the room that you were all dead; and then——"

"I did that," she interrupted him. "I did it to save the child and myself. I did not intend to administer it to the child, but in the struggle——"

"You did it? How?"

"With this." She raised a needle and showed it to him. "It is a poison—no, not a poison—a drug of my country. It paralyzes without injuring. I sought to use it upon Gerald in order to save Tonoyah's life; but in the struggle—he had Tonoyah in his arms, you know—we were all wounded by the needle. I had only just time to stagger to the small chair with my child and to fall into another one myself, when it overcame me. Hark! Is he breaking loose, do you think?"

It sounded as if he had broken loose, for at that moment they could hear the crashing of breaking furniture in the next room.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VITIC KING.

The detective had assured Idayah that it would not be possible for her husband to break loose from the irons that held him bound to the chair, but he had not reckoned correctly upon the great strength that Starbuck possessed.

All his life the man had been an athlete, and always the first in his class. More than that, he was a very large man. Considerable more than six feet in height, broad of shoulder, mighty of sinew and limb, he was an antagonist worthy of respect from the mightiest adversary.

As Nick and Idayah stopped their talk to listen to the noises from the adjoining room, the detective realized by the sounds he heard that Starbuck had succeeded in freeing himself, and was even then throwing from him the last of the bonds that held him.

Instantly the detective determined what to do.

With a bound he reached the side of the crib where the child was sleeping, and raising it in his arms, he placed it against its mother's breast; then he opened the door from the bedroom into the corridor, and shoved them gently through it, after which he closed and locked the door after them.

It was, perhaps, a fortunate thing that Idayah was still dressed for the street; it was also fortunate that the time was June, and the day was warm and sultry.

"Go to my house, Idayah," he said rapidly. "Wait there for me. I will bring Starbuck."

Then, without awaiting a reply, he closed and locked the door, so that she could not reenter the room, and then he crossed to the other door, which separated him from the now raging Starbuck, and threw it wide ajar.

The maddened man had literally torn the chair in which he had been seated in pieces, and now he stood in the middle of the room, facing the detective, brandishing one of the arms of it in his raised right hand, and with the expression of a fiend upon his usually serene countenance.

When he saw the detective there came one flash of recognition in his eyes, and it was evident that an impulse he felt then made him wish to drop the weapon he held and to conduct himself properly.

But it passed as quickly as it appeared. The brandished arm of the chair, which he had partly lowered, was raised again, the ferocious glare returned to his eyes, and he took one step forward, as if to attack his friend.

Truly, his entire aspect was that of a madman—of violent raving—and yet Nick believed that behind it all the man was conscious of what he did, and was sorry for it.

The term "possessed of a devil," while largely a figure of speech, exactly represented the condition of Starbuck at that moment; and his aspect was so ferocious that a man less accustomed to facing emergencies than Nick Carter was, would have thought twice before going forward to the struggle that surely must ensue.

But Nick did not think twice. He did not stop to think at all.

When he opened the door and entered the room he had

already determined what was to be done, and his only desire now was to have it done as quickly as possible.

But first he attempted what his will power might do.

As Starbuck stepped one pace toward him, he advanced one step toward Starbuck; and then they both paused, as if to measure the distance between them, as well as to calculate the probable outcome of the struggle that was to follow.

"Starbuck!" said the detective gently.

A growl like that of an angry beast was his answer.

"Starbuck, listen to me."

For one brief instant the man seemed to shrink backward, and then, as if a new paroxysm of his rage had taken possession of him, he sprang forward with extended arms, and the detective braced himself to meet the attack.

But the madman was wary.

He had almost reached the detective when he swerved to one side, and so managed to pass him, and then with a wild run he reached the door that was open between the two rooms, and darted through it.

But he paused on the threshold in amazement, to discover that the room was empty; and it was then that he thanked Heaven that he had had the forethought to thrust Idayah and the child into the hall and to bid them go away.

It was then, also, that he had his opportunity, and one which might not come again.

Starbuck's back was toward him for the instant, and, with a bound, Nick leaped into the air and alighted upon the shoulders of his maddened friend.

A roar of rage, more as if it had proceeded from an animal than a man, filled the room; and Starbuck sought to turn upon his assailant; but already Nick had secured the half-hitch of ju-jutsu upon him, and in just three seconds from the time Starbuck was lying on his back in the middle of the floor of the parlor, as helpless as the babe which had just been carried away out of his reach.

Nick, with his knowledge of ju-jutsu, had paralyzed the muscles of the man temporarily, and he could only lie there on his back and glare up at his friend, as if he would like to tear him to pieces if he could.

And yet, behind that terrible glare, Nick was conscious of something other than fiendishness. There was an evidence that Starbuck realized what he was doing, and was suffering tortures of mind because he could not control those impulses to kill.

Nick knew that this paralyzed condition could not last long. He knew that Starbuck must soon recover from it, and that unless he was somehow confined again before the powers of motion returned to him, the struggle would have to be undertaken a second time.

The handcuffs with which he had been confined before were useless now.

They were scattered about on the floor in broken bits, where the great strength of the madman had snapped them to pieces.

But there was a vial of chloroform in the detective's pocket, for wherever he went he was always prepared for emergencies; it was one of the rules of his life and profession.

Quick to act always, he produced the chloroform at once, poured the contents of the vial upon his handkerchief, and clapped it across the nose and mouth of the helpless man; and the latter, in his effort to recover the use of his muscles, breathed hard, and was, therefore, overcome the more quickly.

With a sigh or two he fell under the influence of the drug, and in a moment he was unconscious.

And then Nick acted hastily, indeed.

He knew that he would have very little time for what he intended to do, but he stepped to the telephone that was in the room and called up Doctor Stag, who lived just around the corner from the hotel.

It was during the office-hours of the physician, and Nick was sure that he would be at home, and when, a moment later, he recognized the voice of the doctor over the wire, he almost smiled a welcome through the transmitter.

"Doctor," he said rapidly. "This is Carter. Yes. I am at the Mammoth. Room 1046. It is a matter of life and death that you should come here at once. Come straight to the room without a word at the office. Bring a hypodermic with you, and some morphine. Leave everything, and come quickly."

The answering "All right" came to him like a respite, and he returned the receiver to the hook, and stepped back again to the side of the prostrate man on the floor, and stood there, looking down upon him and thinking deeply, until he thought it time for the doctor to make his appearance; and then he stepped out upon the corridor and stood waiting near the door until the elevator stopped at that floor, and the physician stepped from it.

"I am always bringing you interesting cases, doctor," he said, as he led the way into the room. "Now I have got one for you which is more interesting than any you have ever had."

"Chloroform," said the doctor, sniffing, and looking down upon his patient.

"Yes," replied Nick. "I had to use it in order to quiet him. If you had been here you would have said that it was a case of acute and violent dementia. I happen to know that it is not; that is, that it is not so according to the precedents to which you are accustomed. The man was mad, certainly; but the madness had been brought about by something in the nature of a drug that had been administered to him—how, I do not know."

The doctor's reply was a grunt. He was already on his knees beside Starbuck.

"First," continued the detective, "I paralyzed his spine with ju-jutsu; then I administered chloroform; and now I want you to give him a hypodermic syringe of morphin to keep him quiet until we can get him to my house and put him in the padded room on the top floor. There you can study the case at your leisure."

Another grunt by way of response.

"But the point is that I wish to get him away from this hotel as quietly as possible, and without the facts of the case being known."

"All right," said the doctor. "I'll fix him. You go down and make your other arrangements. I will be ready for you in ten minutes."

Nick left the physician and his patient alone together without another word, and descended to the office, where he was fortunate enough to find the manager almost at once.

"Mr. Starbuck has suddenly been taken very ill," he said. "I am going to take him to my house. I have called Doctor Stag to him, and he is now with Starbuck. I believe he is administering morphine, and the consequence is that Mr. Starbuck will have to be carried from the hotel, so I want you to fix it for us to descend in the freight-elevator, and leave the hotel through the alley. I think that arrangement will please you as well as me."

It did, of course.

Hotel-proprietors dislike to have sickness in any form happen in their houses, and so the arrangements were very quickly consummated.

It was only half an hour from the time when Nick first called the physician over the telephone when a closed carriage drove away from the alley-entrance to the hotel, and it carried inside it the detective and the unconscious form of Gerald Starbuck.

The doctor had returned hastily to his office, to excuse himself temporarily to his patients who were awaiting him, but with the assurance that he would hurry to Nick Carter's house without a moment's loss of time.

And Starbuck gave the detective no more trouble. He was as quiet as a sleeping child, the ferociousness had entirely left his face, and his expression was that of a sleeping man, in perfect health.

When the carriage stopped in front of his own door, Nick regarded the sleeping man earnestly for a moment, and then, leaving him, he sprang out, and going to the door, summoned Joseph to assist him.

And Joseph, who never asked questions, came out quietly, grasped Starbuck's legs at the knees, while Nick took him by the shoulders, and together they carried him into the house, up the stairs, and to the room which Nick had referred to in talking with the doctor—the padded room on the top floor, which Nick often had occasion to use.

It was not until they had deposited him there and he had given Joseph careful directions concerning his care, that Nick thought to ask about Idayah and the child, whom he had sent alone from the hotel to await him there. But now he did so.

"Where is the lady, Joseph?" he asked. "Where is Mrs. Starbuck?"

"Mrs. Starbuck?" replied Joseph. "She went out with you, sir."

"I know; but hasn't she returned? Has she not been here within the last half-hour, with her child?"

"No, sir."

Nick was startled; but Joseph was saying something more, and he listened.

"But there was a man here, sir—a stranger—only a few moments ago. He said to give his compliments to you, sir, and to say that he would call again."

"His name, Joseph! His name! Did he give it?"

"I think he was woozy, sir—for he said to tell you that the Vitic King had called upon you. I shut the door in his face."

CHAPTER VIII.

RESCUED FROM AN AWFUL FATE.

"The Vitic King!"

Nick Carter repeated the information after Joseph, almost involuntarily, for although he had not heard that precise expression before, he knew instantly to whom it referred.

"The Vitic King! Zanabayah!" he repeated again. "Zanabayah, the Terrible! When was he here?"

"Ten or fifteen minutes before your own arrival, sir."

"He was tall, and dark, with piercing eyes, and a cruel smile? A creepy sort of an individual, Joseph?"

"Not at all, sir. He was just a harmless old man, as gentle-looking as a Mexican burro, and as harmless, I should say. Really, sir, there was nothing whatever that was terrible about him, although I will admit that his eyes were unusually bright for a man of his age."

"That will do, Joseph. He was disguised, that is all."

"If you will pardon me, sir, I did not think so. His appearance was extremely natural."

"Nevertheless, it was a disguise. Have you not seen me appear so naturally that you could not have told the difference."

"Yes, sir; often. But there is only one Mr. Carter, sir."

"Nonsense. From what I am told, this man who was here could give me a long handicap in the art of disguising. How did he come here? Was he afoot, or did he have a carriage?"

"There was a carriage at the curb, sir."

"Indeed! And was anybody inside of it?"

"I think so, sir; a lady."

"And a child?"

"Now, that you speak of it, sir, I think there was. I am quite sure of it."

"Hark! There is the bell. It is the doctor. Bring him directly to this room. Hurry!"

When the doctor entered the room Nick followed a course which he always adopted with this particular physician; that is, he told him everything about the case exactly as it was, concealing nothing. He even went so far as to describe that encounter he had had personally with Zanabayah in the corridor of the hotel.

"I tell you of that, doctor, in order that you may understand something about the hellish powers of that strange man. His knowledge of drugs and forces with which we are unfamiliar is phenomenal, and I have not a doubt in the world that he has somehow succeeded in administering something of the kind to poor Starbuck."

Doctor Stag nodded, and rubbed his hands together. He liked cases of this sort.

"And now," continued Nick, "I am going to leave you in charge here, doctor. You may do exactly as you like; only I would suggest that you be careful of Starbuck when he comes out of his present condition, for if he remains the madman that he was before I got the best of him, I wouldn't give tuppence for your life."

"You need not worry about me, Nick," replied the doctor. "Just go right along about your own affairs, and leave me to run this. I think you will find that I know more about it than you think."

But when Nick went out of the room he called to Patsy and Tomlins, and stationed them on guard outside the door of the padded room, to be ready to reply to a summons from the doctor at any moment; and then he hurried down again to Joseph, hoping against hope that during the interim Idayah might have arrived at the house, or that some message might have been received from her.

But none had; neither had she appeared.

He had no doubt now that Zanabayah had waited outside the hotel, or in the office of it, for the appearance of somebody from that room on the tenth floor, and that, perceiving Idayah and her child approaching, he had exercised some of his power in getting her back again with him.

How the man could have induced Idayah, with her child, to enter the carriage with him was more than Nick could guess; but that he had done so, there seemed to be no doubt.

"My only recourse, therefore, is to return to the hotel as soon as possible," was his thought—and he hurried there without any delay.

In the meantime, however, it appeared that Idayah's maid and also Starbuck's valet, who had been temporarily absent during the excitement in the rooms on the tenth floor, had returned, and had caused some excitement about the hotel before the manager had succeeded in quieting them; but they had both returned to report that Mr. Starbuck's apartment was in readiness for him and his wife, and so the detective sent them off there, with a few words of explanation, to await his coming; and then he sought the manager again.

It was a moment now when he felt the necessity of taking the manager into his confidence, and this he proceeded to do, telling him as much of the story of the happenings of that morning as he thought best to do; and after that, one by one, the clerks in the office who were on duty at the time of the disturbance were called before the detective and questioned.

Nick described the old man as Joseph had done; and one of the clerks remembered to have seen him waiting; to have seen Mrs. Starbuck come down with her child in her arms; to have seen the old man step toward her, hat in hand, and to have seen them leave the hotel by the main exit, together.

"Now, give me the carriage-clerk," said the detective, and as soon as that individual appeared, the description was undergone again; with the result that after continued questioning the man who had driven the "fare" from the hotel to Nick's house, was before him.

"I know very little about him, sir," said the driver, in reply to questions. "He was a nice old gentleman. Said he wanted to be driven directly to your house, sir, and as I knew where it was I asked no more questions, but took him there."

"And the lady and child?"

"Yes, sir. Of course, sir."

"And where did you take them after you came away from my house?"

The driver hung his head for a moment; and then he raised it suddenly, and with a flash in his eyes he thrust one hand into his pocket and drew out a fifty-dollar bill.

"The old man gave me this, sir," he said rapidly, "to keep my mouth shut until to-morrow. He said that I

could go straight to you in the morning and tell you as much or as little as I wanted to," he blurted out rapidly. "And I almost fell, sir. Fifty dollars is a good deal; but you have always been a friend to me, sir, and a friend to all the boys who served you well, and I think your friendship is worth more to me than fifty."

"Well?" said the detective. "Keep the fifty—and tell all you know."

"I don't want the fifty now, sir. I wouldn't touch it again. It almost made a fool, as well as a villain of me," and he threw it upon the floor. "It can lie there and rot, for all of me!" he added.

"Good! Now, tell. Possibly I can find another and a cleaner fifty for you—later."

"I drove them around to a house in Thirty-fifth street, sir."

"Quick! What else? I see that you have more to tell. What is it?"

"It ain't much, sir. We carried her inside to a room—the front one on the second floor. The old man gave the woman of the house a roll of bills, and left the lady there in her charge, sir. And then he came out again, sir, and we drove away."

"We! Who?"

"The old man and the child, sir."

"Where, where, where did you take them?"

"Only to the corner, sir, where the subway station is. He got out there, sir, and took the baby with him down into the subway; and that is the last I seen of him, and it is all I know about him, sir."

"Drive me back to Thirty-fifth street as fast as you can drive," said the detective, leaping to his feet; and in another moment they were whirling through the street at a rate of speed that if an automobile had been attempting it the chauffeur would have been arrested before he had gone a block.

But the driving pulled up at the door of the house he had described, and Nick never ran up the steps to the front door and pulled the bell, and kept on pulling it.

But, notwithstanding the urgency of his summons, there came no reply to it. It was evident that the roll of bills which the "old man" had passed to the woman of the house had included with it instructions that she was not to open the door to anyone callers.

The detective glanced behind him into the street. A hansom was passing with its load of busy souls thereon, and he shouted, and Nick called to him.

"Come up here a moment," he said. "There is a five-spot in it for you."

The plumber lost no time in complying with the request, and in another moment Nick had secured a heavy pipe-wrench from the kit, and with it as a hammer it required but three blows before the door of the house was shattered and the way inside was open before him.

In the meantime, the inmates of the house had gathered around the door inside of it, and among them the madam of the house, who was apparently in a defiant mood; but Nick lost no time in useless parley with her.

He stepped quickly forward, and said:

"I want the lady who was left here in your charge only a little while ago. If you try to stop me or interfere with me, I will tear your house inside out; if you assist me, and if no harm of any kind has come to the lady, you can fix up your door at your convenience; for it is all I wish of you."

He had passed on up the stairs while he was talking, and the woman had followed him; and now she demanded to know who he was.

"I am Nick Carter," he said. "That ought to be enough for you."

Evidently it was, for when he reached the landing she stepped hastily ahead of him, and threw open the door to the front room on that floor, and then she stood aside for him to pass in.

Idayah, still with her hat on, and looking as if she had just dropped down to rest, was lying upon a couch in that room, apparently sleeping.

Nick did not even stop to look around him as he advanced toward her, but, raising her gently in his arms, he turned again and carried her out through the door, down the stairs, and into the street, where he deposited her inside the carriage.

As he did that and was about to follow her inside, having called to the driver to take them home, he chanced to raise his eyes, and he saw, advancing rapidly toward him down the street—*Zanabayah*.

Not the Zanabayah whom Joseph had described to him; but the Zanabayah of the hallway; the Zanabayah who was tall and dark and handsome, and who had the devilish smile and the satanic cast of countenance.

At that instant Nick Carter was nearer to being in a rage than he ever permitted himself to approach.

He realized fully the enormity of the thing that Zanabayah had done; and he realized also that the man was

returning now to the house and to his intended victim in his own proper person, to complete his victory over her; to consummate at least one part of that terrible revenge that he had determined to visit upon her.

And Nick remembered, too, the danger of coming into personal contact with that man; he remembered the awful paralyzing consequences of the use of that subtle force of which he was master, and he thought of what might have happened had he been half an hour later in his own visit of rescue.

And he did a thing that he had never in his life done before; *he drew his revolver deliberately from his pocket, and took a snap shot at the man who was approaching him with a smile upon his saturnine face.*

CHAPTER IX.

THE MENACE OF A SUBTLE FOE.

And now a wonderful thing happened.

Nick Carter had never been known to miss a target that he fired at; and yet, the man at whom he fired the shot now stopped in his tracks, smiled at the detective, waved his right hand toward him—*and then quietly and deliberately turned on his heel, and walked away in the opposite direction, as if being shot at in the streets of New York were merely an ordinary circumstance.*

Nick had not intended in that shot to injure the man very severely; *but he had intended to hit him.*

The bullet had been aimed at and had been intended to hit the man's leg below the knee; and while the act was of itself an unprecedented thing for Nick Carter to do, he felt that the outrage which had been so nearly perpetrated upon Idayah justified him in resorting to extreme measures in disabling the activity of this fiend who seemed to be so resourceful in evil-doing.

Nick Carter knew that there had been a bullet in that barrelage. He knew that the bullet had gone true. He knew that he had hit Zanabayah precisely on the spot at which he had aimed; and yet Zanabayah had turned coolly about and walked away, without a limp or a suggestion of being wounded.

The detective stood after him. He could do nothing else.

"What manner of man was this, anyhow?" he asked himself, still staring. "This man who can change his appearance almost at will; who can paralyze me with fear, so that I am incapable of motion; can turn aside a bullet as if it were made of a wad of paper?"

Crowds collect very quickly in New York. A crowd had begun to collect even when Nick Carter was battering in the door of the house from which he had rescued Idayah; and now it was augmenting so rapidly that Nick waved his hand at the driver, and, leaping inside the carriage, was driven rapidly away.

He was glad that no policeman had appeared on the scene to inquire the cause of the row at the house, and of the pistol-shot, for he did not care to have a report of it appear on the blotter at the police station-house; and, to tell the truth, he was was rather ashamed of his hasty action in shooting.

Idayah was still unconscious when they arrived at the detective's house, and he carried her inside, and to the library, where he called his housekeeper to her.

But after a little she showed signs of coming around, and in less than half an hour the housekeeper came to him to say that the lady would like to speak with him.

"What has happened, Nick?" she asked, as soon as he appeared.

"Nothing much," he said. "You somehow fell into the hands of Zanabayah when you left me at the hotel. I found you and got you back again; that is all."

He was extremely gratified to discover that she had no idea where she had been during the interim.

"When I descended in the elevator," she told him, "an old man met me near the office of the hotel. He told me that he was one of your assistants, and had been ordered to wait there for me. In my excitement—for I must admit that for once I was excited—it never occurred to me that you had had no opportunity to send word for anybody, or that there had not been time, and so I accepted his escort to a carriage.

"As soon as we were inside the carriage, I knew that he was Zanabayah, and even as I made an effort to get away from him he jabbed a needle into my arm, and I knew nothing more until just now. But—*where is Tonoyah?*"

Nick had been dreading this question; but he knew that it was best to be perfectly frank with Idayah, and he replied at once:

"I rescued you, but that fiend still has the child. I am going now in search of him."

"Wait," she said; and she passed her hands over her eyes while she leaned back against the cushions of the large chair in which she was seated.

"Wait," she repeated, after a moment. "Let me think."

"You told me that you did not think that Zanabayah would attempt to abduct the boy," the detective said to her.

"No. I did not think he would. The abduction can do him no good."

"Why? It will make you suffer if he keeps the boy away from you."

"He will not keep him away from me for long—and he cannot injure him."

"Cannot injure him! Good Heaven, Idayah! What is to prevent him?"

"The blood that flows in the veins of that boy will prevent him. Tonoyah is the grandson of Tonoyah, the king."

"Confound Tonoyah the king—with all due respect to the memory of your respected father. But you are the *daughter* of Tonoyah, the king, and Zanabayah would have injured you, mightily, if I had not happened to be on hand in time to prevent it."

"You would not understand it if I should explain; but it is impossible that Zanabayah should kill any one in whose veins flows the blood of the royal family of my country. It is written. It is one of the immutable laws. To abduct the boy—to take him away from me will be of no advantage to the man, for if he should kill or maim the child, he would destroy his own power by that very act. I cannot make you understand it, but it is true. And in my own case, it would be the same."

"And yet, Idayah, he might, with his fiendishness, find a method of injury to yourself which would be more terrible to you than death."

"I had not thought of that. I had not given it a thought."

"Of course you had not."

"I had not given it a thought," she repeated, "but now I understand. What it is that you mean; and, more, I understand why it is so. There is a double purpose in Zanabayah's pursuit of me—a terrible purpose behind it all that has not appeared until now."

She nodded her head.

"Hereafter you will guard yourself against it," he said quietly.

"How can I?" she asked him, and for the first time that he had known Idayah, Nick saw a gleam of genuine terror in her eyes. "Ah! He knows how to strike where it will hurt the most. The man's subtle power is terrible. If he comes where I am, he can by a touch render me unconscious, before I have a chance to defend myself; or he can touch me with the paralyzing power of the vitic force, and I will be as incapable of defense as——"

"As the child is now," suggested Nick.

She wrung her hands together in silence, and then she looked up into the eyes of the detective in silence, but with an expression that was so beseeching that Nick leaned over toward her and took one of her hands in both his own.

"Courage, Idayah," he said. "I will somehow stand between you and harm."

"Thank you," she murmured. "I have not properly considered the evil power of that man. I will do so from now on. But I must be calm and steadfast, and thoughtful. Haste will not avail either of us, and it will only strengthen Zanabayah's power. First, Nick, my friend, I must not for one moment be left unguarded."

"I know that. I will provide for it now."

"Now, tell me, what have you done with Gerald? Where is he?"

"Up-stairs in this house, under the care of the greatest and best physician in this country."

"Let us go to him. I can help in his restoration. I know something about that terrible drug with which he has been inoculated."

"Come, then," said the detective. "Follow me."

They ascended the stairs together, and presently rapped at the door of the padded room; and after a moment Doctor Stag stepped outside and closed the door after him.

He was presented to Idayah; and then he said:

"The patient is better. When he awakens, which will be in another half-hour, he will be in control of himself. I was about to say 'in his right mind,' but that would not be a correct expression under the circumstances, for he has never been out of his mind for a moment. He has known all along what he was doing, and he has suffered horribly because he could not control his actions. His mania was to kill; and especially was it directed against his own child. I would suggest to you, Senator, and to you, Nick, that Starbuck be not permitted to see his child at all—for several days at least. The poison in Starbuck's blood at the present moment, some traces of which

will remain for some time, is one that is extracted from a weed that grows in among the inaccessible heights of the Himalaya Mountains. It is known, because Tibetans have brought some of it out at times; but it has been declared impossible to get any of it unless one had a balloon for the purpose."

Nick looked at the doctor in amazement. He spoke as if he were perfectly familiar with the terrible toxin; and then, with a smile, he said:

"I suppose a flying-machine would answer as well as a balloon, wouldn't it?"

"Quite. I was about to say, the result of the poison is marvelous. You have heard of Eastern natives doing what is called 'Running amuck?' The act is the result of this same poison—that is the same principle, speaking scientifically; only the poison they use is extracted from a different weed, which grows lower down the mountainsides. But the effect is the same, though not as powerful."

"Doctor," said Idayah, "have you ever been in Nepal?"

He bowed low before her.

"I was born there, madam—strangely enough. My parents were English. But I lived in that mysterious country throughout my youth—in Khadmandu."

"Will you take me to my husband? Together, we can restore him."

She turned again to Nick before the doctor could reply and added:

"And you, Nick, will you remember what I have said, and what I have to fear? Will you see that I am guarded? And will you——"

"I know what you would ask, Idayah," he interrupted her. "I will do all. My three assistants shall be placed on guard over you with instructions not to leave you for a moment. Chick, Patsy, and Ten-Ichi shall be responsible for you, and you will be quite safe. As for the other question you would have asked—I am going out at once to do what I can to bring little Tonoyah back to his mother."

"I ask you," she said simply; and then, as the doctor opened the door, the two passed inside the room together, leaving Nick standing in the hall.

CHAPTER X.

A STARTLING SUGGESTION.

Things had been happening rather rapidly for Nick Carter since eight o'clock that morning, and he was astounded to discover that it was still early in the day. He looked at his watch and found that it lacked but a few moments to luncheon, but, as he felt no inclination to eat, he descended the stairs and called Chick to him in the library.

"Listen, Chick," he said; and then he rapidly recounted the incidents of the morning—the things that had happened in five hours of actual time. At the conclusion he said:

"I have strict orders for you. I want them followed to the letter, with no deviation on any account, or for any reason. You understand?"

"Yes."

"You are to keep either Patsy or Ten-Ichi on guard in the upper hall, near the door of whatever room Idayah happens to be in, and whichever one is there, he must remain there without leaving his post until I have given other orders."

"That is down, all right," said Chick, nodding.

"The other one must stand guard outside the house—on the front steps; and he must stick to his post as religiously as the other one does. They may change off from time to time, however. You may change them about each hour. It will give them a variety."

"All right. That shall be done."

"Idayah is not to be permitted to leave that floor. She must not descend even one flight of stairs. I neglected to tell her that, but you may say that it is my order. She will understand, and she will obey."

"Very good."

"Only Doctor Stag is to be permitted to pass up or down those stairs to and from that floor. Nobody else; not even one of the servants in the house. Got that?"

"Yes."

"Idayah must be informed of all this when she comes out of that room where she is now, with Starbuck and the doctor. Tell her that she can have the run of that floor. That I will send her things to her from the hotel at once, or as soon as I can get to it."

"Yes."

"Your duties will be to remain in control of the situation; to see that my orders are carried out. The front door of the house is not to be opened save to admit of the passing in and out of Patsy and Ten-Ichi when they exchange places, or to admit me to the house. If clients call, they must be told by whoever is on guard outside that they cannot enter. No matter what the business

may be, or what the urgency of any case that arises, it must be postponed, or the client must seek some one else. There is to be no exception to this order."

"I understand."

"I think that is all save that you are to keep moving about the house yourself from top to bottom. You are to see that everything is all right. You are to neglect nothing. That fiend will make another—possibly many other determined efforts to get possession of Idayah."

"I understand."

"Zanabayah now has the child in his possession. Idayah thinks that he cannot harm the boy, but I think differently. I think, with his devilish ingenuity, he will find a way to do so, just as he thought out a way in which he could harm her, whose life is charmed against him in some way that I do not understand.

"But there have been many things about those people that I do not understand, and I find that the only way is for me to go ahead blindly and prepare to meet all that comes, no matter whether I understand it or not.

"I think that in some way he intends to use the child to get at Idayah. But, Chick?"

"Yes."

"I cannot remain here. I must go out. I must be up and doing. You shall remain here in my stead. You must be me for the present. I rely upon you as fully as I do upon myself. You know that and realize it fully."

"Yes," said Chick.

"And so I leave you. Carry up the luncheon to Idayah yourself. See that she eats it, too. Offer the doctor some when he comes down; and tell him that I wish he would manage to pass every hour that he can do so with us until this business is over. Will you?"

"Yes."

"That is all. I am going now."

"Have you any idea when you will return?"

"Not the slightest. I only know that as long as that fiend in human shape, who is called Zanabayah, the Terrible, is at large, there is not one among us whose life or whose happiness is worth a penny bun down at the corner. Be on your guard."

"I will."

"And, by the way, disconnect the telephone. Say to Central that you will not want to use it until further orders, and that if my number is asked for to say that the telephone is out of order, or is not working."

"You might wish to use it yourself."

"I shall not."

"But why——"

"Never mind why. I am not sure that I know why myself. I only know that the vitic force which Zanabayah exerts is a superlative condition of electricity, and that I don't want any chance left for him to send a bolt of it into this house."

"There is the electric light wire. That enters the house."

"True enough. Go into the cellar and cut it. Do it now. We will get along with the gas until this thing is over."

Chick could not repress a smile, and Nick saw it.

"It all sounds very trivial, and, no doubt, extremely foolish," he said, "but this is a case and a condition where nothing must be forgotten. We have got a man to fight against who is not a man at all, but a human devil. I have called him an embodied Satan once, and I think the term was well applied. I wish I knew more about the confounded forces that he exerts. Good-by."

"I am sorry about that telephone," said Chick, as they were about to part.

The detective halted a moment. Then he said:

"Send Joseph to Monkton's drug-store. Tell him to spend the rest of the day there, and to be ready to answer the telephone there if it should ring. If I have anything to communicate I will telephone to him and he can bring the message to you."

"That is better. That makes me feel easier."

They parted then.

Nick ran down the steps and hurried along the avenue.

It was very much like looking for a needle in a haystack to start out blindly among the streets and avenues of New York in search of that child; but the detective felt one impulse that he was not conscious of ever having experienced before, and that was—that he would somehow be led on the right track.

It might be called superstition to think so. He did not consider that, and he would not have cared if he had done so. The point was that he felt that by going out and by being abroad something would happen to put him on the right track.

But, if the truth be told, he was really offering himself as a target for Zanabayah.

He felt that the human fiend had already discovered that Nick Carter was not an opponent to be despised.

Twice that day already Nick had foiled him with all

is resources; and the detective was now certain that Zanabayah would feel the necessity of getting Nick out of the way before he attempted to carry to completion his hellish designs.

And so that was really why Nick went abroad in the street. In the hope that Zanabayah would be on guard somewhere, would see him go, would realize that he had not left Idayah unguarded, and would, therefore, for the time being transfer his attack from her to the detective.

One of Nick's methods for finding people was to create conditions which would compel the person he sought to seek him; he felt that he had done so in this case, and that Zanabayah would be "looking for him" now.

He stopped for a moment on the corner, undecided which way to go; and then he remembered that there was an errand he wished to attend to, and that was to send Idayah's baggage to her from the hotel.

And so he turned in that direction, and presently walked in through the main entrance to the great hostelry.

He passed to the desk and gave the necessary directions to the clerk in charge; and then it ocurred to him that it would not be a bad idea for him to visit the rooms on the tenth floor once more.

Accordingly, he explained what he wished to do and asked for a key to the rooms; then, having received it, he passed on to the elevator and ascended.

As he stepped out of it and the grated door shut behind him, he stopped for a moment.

He had surprise the door of the room he sought was ajar, and he knew that this should not be so.

Wonderingly, he stepped quickly forward; and then, as he passed through the open doorway, a sight met his eyes which made him stop and stare in the most utter astonishment he had ever experienced.

It was the parlor of the suite where he entered. Over in the far corner of the room, reclining in an easy chair, as much at home, apparently, as if the rooms had been his own, Zanabayah was seated, calmly fanning himself with his handkerchief; beside him, at play on the floor, was the child Tommie, to all appearances, quite content.

It was a scene of domesticity, almost.

Just to add to the amazement of the affair, Zanabayah was looking calmly toward the detective as he stood in the doorway. He was smiling as if in welcome. He seemed not in the least disturbed or surprised by the detective's coming; indeed, he acted exactly as if he had been expecting him.

Although Nick was amazed, he lost no time in stepping inside the room and closing the door behind him. Then he placed his back against it—and waited for the other man to speak.

He was determined about one thing at least, and that was that the strange man should play no more tricks upon him.

"I was expecting you," said Zanabayah calmly, continuing to fan himself, but not otherwise moving at all.

"Indeed," replied the detective. "That is strange, since it is only five minutes ago that I had any thought of coming here at all."

"I knew that you would come here," was the quiet reply.

"Well, we won't argue the point. I don't think that you are half as glad to see me as I am to encounter you. We have already got a few little reckonings to settle, and I don't propose to be stunned again by any of your shocks, either. Once to-day you exhibited the ability to turn aside bullets. I don't know quite how you did it, unless you are shod with iron up to your knees; but I want to tell you now that if you attempt to move from that chair or to do anything at all without my expressed permission, I shall shoot you again, and the next time I do it the bullet will hit you squarely in one of your eyes, and a second one will take you in the other eye quicker than you could count two."

There was a gleam from those same eyes as Nick Carter made the statement; a gleam which looked to Nick like surprised consternation, only it disappeared so quickly that he could not judge it correctly; and Zanabayah replied calmly:

"You may spare me your threats, Mr. Carter. Your bullets are powerless to injure me; but, nevertheless, I shall remain where I am for the present. You think that I am in your power, but the fact is, you are in mine—as wholly so as if you were already dead."

CHAPTER XI.

GERALD STARBUCK'S DOUBLE.

The detective had spoken with a quiet decision that carried weight with it, for he meant literally everything he said.

He knew that the man in the chair facing him secretly was more dangerous than all the other scoundrels

he had ever encountered in his experience, even were the possibilities of them all focused into one being.

He knew that Zanabayah possessed resources and possibilities of which he could not even guess, and that the only way for him to keep safely out of the fellow's clutches was to remain at a safe distance from him; to keep him at arm's length; to watch him narrowly, and to shoot him, and shoot to kill, if the necessity should arise.

It was not often that Nick Carter was driven to the extremity of arguing in this manner; but here was an extraordinary condition by which he was confronted.

Zanabayah was not human; he was *more* than human.

This expression should be taken literally, for the reason that it was a fact that the man came from a country where the knowledge of the forces of nature was so profound that the possession of that knowledge rendered a man more than human, as we understand the word.

For, after all, the word human refers solely to enlightenment. Unenlightened persons are referred to as brutes or savages; humanity means learning.

And Zanabayah was learned. How profoundly Nick did not know—could not know.

If Nick Carter possessed a quality that was more pronounced it was determination.

Determination to do, concentration of purpose, confidence in his own abilities, coolness, alertness, resolute will, daring—all these were his to a marked degree; and now that he was face to face with the man; now that they were alone in that room of the hotel together; now that the child which Nick sought was also there, evidently unharmed, *Nick was determined that the reckoning between himself and Zanabayah should be final!*

He remembered, while he stood there, that the time would not likely be long before they would be interrupted.

He had already given the order at the desk for the maid and porter of the hotel to be sent to that room to prepare Idayah's baggage and send it to her. At any moment those persons might appear.

It must be confessed that he recalled this fact with a sense of pleasure, too, for while he in no sense feared the man who sat so quietly in the corner, there was always that mystery about him which surrounded his presence with a feeling of dread.

At the declaration made by Zanabayah that the detective was in his power, notwithstanding the conditions under which they confronted each other, Nick smiled broadly.

"We will not haggle over details," he said. "I will, thank you to keep silent a moment."

One of those same stealthy smiles was the only reply, and Nick at once turned his attention to the child. The baby was something over a year old. Perhaps it could walk.

"Tonoyah?" he called to it.

The child raised its eyes to the detective's face and smiled at him.

"Come!" said Nick. "Come here to me."

The child started as if to obey, but Zanabayah half put forth a restraining hand, as if to intercept it; but Nick was prepared for that move. His revolver gleamed in his hand, and he said in a low tone, in order not to alarm the child, but with an emphasis about which there was no mistake:

"If you touch that child I will shoot your hand off, Zanabayah. Put the hand back where it was. That is right. Now keep it there. If you move again, you will regret it. Tonoyah, come here. Come here to me."

The child slid down from its chair to the floor and toddled slowly across the room toward the detective. It has been said that children of tender years always instinctively know who their friends are. It is certain that little Tonoyah toddled toward Nick Carter then without a sign of fear about it; but it was also certain that it had been playing in the company of that human fiend with no appearance of fear.

And then, while the detective watched the child in its approach, he also saw, as if out of the corner of his eye—as the expression goes when we observe something which we are not directly regarding—a stealthy motion of that same arm of Zanabayah.

For purposes of his own, however, he preferred to appear not to notice it. Apparently, he kept his eyes fixed upon the child, which was now almost to him.

The child came nearer. Nick reached out his right hand to take hold of it, and then the motion which he had expected Zanabayah to make happened.

It was a drawing back of that same arm with a sudden motion; but Nick had seen it in time, and seemingly without looking toward the man, without changing his position or taking aim at all, he turned the muzzle of his revolver ever so little and fired.

The hand dropped to the man's side uselessly, for the

bullet had pierced it through the palm and the force of the impact had deprived it of strength for the moment, certainly.

The child, startled by the shot fired so near it, screamed outright, but Nick had already grasped it with his left hand, and now he pulled the boy toward him and lifted him upon the hollow of his left arm, while all the time he kept the muzzle of his weapon pointing straight at the man in the chair.

But now Nick was regarding the man with amazement. The hand was wounded; he could see where the bullet had pierced it; there was blood upon it, and the man had already drawn a handkerchief from his pocket with the other hand and was winding it slowly around the wound.

But save for that occupation, he seemed unmoved by the accident of the wound.

One would have said that he did not feel it; almost, that he was performing the service of bandaging it for another.

Outwardly he was totally indifferent. He was as cool as ever; he was even smiling as if for some reason the wound were a joke.

With the child in his arms Nick stood still and watched the operation while it lasted; but then he backed slowly toward the door, still keeping his revolver raised and ready for instant use.

Although the walls of the hotel were thick and heavy, it occurred to the detective that the report of his pistol might have been heard beyond them, and that outsiders would rush to the room to find out what had happened.

The door was not locked. He remembered that. He had not locked it when he closed it and placed his back against it on entering the room; and now, as he reached behind him to turn the knob and pull it open, his purpose being to pass the child outside, and then to follow himself in the hope that he would find a chambermaid in the hall to whom he could intrust it for the moment—as he reached behind him to open it, having transfered the pistol to his left hand in order to keep the man in front of him still covered, the door flew open against him with such violence that he was thrown violently forward and almost lost his footing.

Then, before he could turn about—before he could do anything to defend himself—somebody passed inside through the door, and at the same instant the wounded man in the corner seemed to be gifted with new life and energy, for he sprang to his feet and lunged forward toward the detective.

But before they could attack him; before he saw them even; before he had recovered his equilibrium and raised himself upright again, the door was burst open a second time, and the burly porter of the hotel almost filled the entrance.

Nick would have called out to him; in fact, he was prepared to do so, but at that instant his glance rested for an instant upon the man who had just entered, and who had so nearly knocked him down, and the words died on his lips unuttered.

The man was Starbuck! He could have sworn it.

But instantly the second thought came to him. No! The man could not be Starbuck! That was impossible. Starbuck was back there in Nick's own house, safely under guard. It would be impossible for him to escape from it, even if he could get outside the padded room.

Who, then, could it be? Somebody disguised as Starbuck? And who could do it so well? Who but Zanabayah himself?

But if the man who looked like Starbuck was Zanabayah, who, then, was the man who had been seated in the corner and whom Nick's bullet had wounded?

If you realize how quickly one will think in an emergency, you will understand that the thoughts recorded here flashed through Nick Carter's mind all in an instant; in fact, while the big hotel porter was crossing the threshold and trying to take in and to comprehend the situation that confronted him—while the man from the corner of the room had advanced less than half the distance across it—while the man who had entered first through the door and who was made up to look like Starbuck was recovering from his own surprise—for it was plain that he was quite as much taken by surprise as Nick had been.

But the porter had heard that shot and it had alarmed him. He had also taken in the situation. Moreover, he happened to be Irish.

He saw the two men advancing toward Nick; he saw the child in Nick Carter's arms; he knew Nick Carter by sight, as it happened.

With a *"Whoopee!"* he launched himself forward like a human battering-ram, and, as it happened, the man who was directly in front of him had been so taken up by what he saw before him as well as with his surprise that he had no idea of the proximity of the porter.

Before he knew it, he was seized around the waist and lifted from his feet, and the next instant he was sent whirling through the air over the porter's head as if he weighed no more in pounds than the child in Nick Carter's arms.

Now, the door was directly behind the porter; moreover, it was open, for the porter had not stopped to close it or to think about it when he entered the room.

The consequence of this was that the man was hurled directly through it to the hallway outside, where, somehow, he alighted on his feet instead of on his head.

And he managed to steady himself, too, for he turned instantly and, reaching inside the room he seized the door and pulled it shut with a bang—and the key, which happened to be on the outside, turned in the lock.

Now, it may seem incredible, but all that has been described happened while you might have counted "One, two, three"; it was all over and the door was closed by the time that Nick Carter was fairly on his feet again.

And the other man—he with the wounded hand? He had advanced on a little way across the room, and as the other one escaped through the door, closing and locking it, he sank back again upon the chair he had formerly occupied, and resumed the caressing of his wounded hand as imperturbably as if there had been no interruption.

"Take this child, Peter, and this gun; and if that fellow in the corner moves before I return, shoot him!" ordered the detective; and as he spoke he consigned the child to the burly arms of the porter and gave him the pistol; and then he leaped away, passed through the connecting doors into the bedroom of the suite, and out at the other door into the corridor.

But the corridor was bare of occupancy; there was not even a chambermaid in sight when Nick rushed from the room.

The elevator had just descended. Nick caught a flashing glimpse of the top of it as it was lost to view—and he stopped where he was.

Then he shook his head in a puzzled way, and, slowly turning [illegible], he lowered the [illegible] and passed through it into the presence of the wounded man and his Irish guard.

"Has he escaped, Peter?" he asked.

"Escaped, is it? No, sir. Not on your life! He'd better not, anyhow!"

Then the detective turned slowly toward the captive.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "Are you Zanabayah?"

The man bowed his head and smiled mockingly, at the same time nursing his hand.

"Who was that other man?" demanded Nick.

Again the mocking smile; but no further reply than that.

"Anyhow," said Nick, "I'll soon put you where you will be harmless for a time," and he crossed the room toward the telephone.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAPTURE OF ZANABAYAH.

Nick's telephone message to the office of the hotel resulted in the presence in that room very soon after it of three big uniformed policemen and two of the hotel detectives; for Nick realized that he had no serious charge to make against the man in the corner—not one that would hold water under the law, save the simple one of having found him seated in a room in the hotel where he did not belong.

He could be locked up only as a suspicious person; that was all.

Nick could not even say that the man had attacked him, for he had not done so. Indeed, if the truth be told, the man might have charged Nick much more seriously than the detective could charge him.

But there was Nick's reputation among all men.

It was known that he did nothing idly; that if he made a charge against any person he not only spoke the truth, but that he also had good reason for making it; and so he told the officers simply to take him to the station-house and to lock him up as a suspicious person and to hold him until further orders.

"And I want at least two of you to take him there," he added. "I know him. He is a slippery individual, and he will get away from you if he has half a chance. I don't want him to get away just at present, either. You will have to call in a surgeon to attend to that hand of his as soon as it can be done."

He watched the officers narrowly as they advanced upon their prisoner, half-expecting that something would happen—that they might be shocked by an electric current, as he had been treated early in the day; but nothing happened at all.

The prisoner regarded the officers imperturbably and with a half-quizzical smile, as if it were all some huge joke which he was particularly enjoying.

And after the man had been led away by the officers he crossed over to the window and remained there, lost in thought, until Peter, the porter, touched him lightly on the shoulder and wanted to know what he should do with the child.

The child, strange to say, had taken the rough-house scenes through which he had just passed as indifferently as though he were accustomed to them; but now, as the detective turned, it stretched out its hands to be taken, and was soon nestling on Nick's shoulder as contentedly as possible.

Nick gave some orders to Peter about the proper disposition of the baggage; and then, with the child in his arms, he left the hotel and hurried to his own home.

But as he hurried along the street he became more and more anxious. He could not explain to his own satisfaction the apparition of that man in the room the man who had seemed to be Starbuck.

"Of all the uncanny, impossible, unheard-of situations that I have ever known or imagined, those of to-day win out," he muttered to himself, as he ascended the steps of his own house and nodded rather curtly to Patsy, who was on guard outside for the time being.

But when he would have passed on inside Patsy called to him.

"Wait a minute, chief," he said. "I've got something to tell you before you go into the house."

Nick stopped.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Starbuck has been on the rampage since you went out. I don't know how he did it, but he made his escape, and——"

"Made his escape!" Nick almost shouted.

"Yes. I don't know how he did it. I was out here; and I was picking my teeth and smoking and thinking of nothing in particular when up walks Mr. Starbuck, as cool as you please, and says he, as genial as ever he spoke in his life, 'How are you, Patsy?' I——"

"Stop!" ordered the detective. "Where is he now?"

"Inside. He wanted to go in and I let him in."

"When was that? How long ago?"

"Ten minutes; maybe not so much."

"You're a fool, Pat!" said Nick shortly; and he turned on his heel and started to enter the house; but he stopped and called out: "Take this child and hold it. Don't let go of it until you give it to me or to its mother."

And Patsy, still agape at the unmerited calling-down he had received, took the child in silence, while Nick produced his latch-key and entered through the door, closing it after him.

"That was Starbuck's double," he was thinking to himself. "What does it all mean?"

He was not long to remain in doubt, for as he stepped into the hall, which was somewhat dark after the brilliant sunlit street, he stumbled over something that was lying on the floor, and he saw that it was Joseph who was lying there, writhing and gasping.

A glance told him that Joseph was not wounded, and that he was more angry than hurt; and then the valet gasped out:

"He shocked me, sir! It was like a galvanic battery, only it was much stronger."

Nick waited to hear no more, but leaving Joseph to recover as best he could, he leaped forward and dashed up the stairs.

"Chick and Ten-Ichi should be here somewhere—unless that fiend has served them as he did Joseph!" was his thought.

At the top of the first landing he found Chick; and the chief assistant was stretched out upon the floor, unconscious. But he was breathing, and Nick knew from the rigidity of his position that he, too, had been shocked by that unknown power which Zanabayah called the vitic force.

The detective was prepared now for almost any discovery; but his one thought amid it all was that the man was still inside the house; that he had not left it; that he must encounter him soon; and that he could not escape, at least without undergoing that encounter.

And Nick's anger was aroused for once.

At the top of the house, in the hall between the landing of the stairway and the front of the building, a strange sight brought him to a halt.

The door of the padded room, which was located in the middle of the house, was open. Through it Nick could see that Starbuck was himself stretched out upon the cot where he had left him two hours before, and that he was, apparently, unconscious or asleep; but directly in front of him stood another Starbuck—an exact counterpart of the man on the cot, looking down upon him with a strange expression on his face—one that might be defined by the word exultation.

Beyond him, on a chair in the corner of the room, Idayah was seated, her eyes staring straight ahead of her, and looking exactly as she had looked in her room in the hotel when she had herself brought about her own paralyzation by the use of a needle tipped with some drug she knew.

Near her, resting easily upon another chair, was Doctor Stag, also looking ahead of him with staring eyes that saw nothing, and Nick realized that he also had been rendered helpless for the moment.

But that was not all. There was another figure still. It was Ten-Ichi.

Starbuck's double was standing with his back toward Nick Carter and had not heard his approach; had no idea that he was about to be interrupted; moreover, he seemed to have no knowledge of the presence of Ten-Ichi; nor had Ten-Ichi heard the approach of the detective.

But the lad was doing something, nevertheless, and Nick crept forward nearer to the scene, watching narrowly what was happening, and prepared to interfere at any instant.

For Ten-Ichi, who had somehow escaped the consequences of meeting that strange double of Starbuck which had so terribly affected the others, was stooping forward almost so that his hands touched the floor, and he was creeping slowly but surely closer and closer toward the big man whose back was turned toward him and who was utterly unconscious of his nearness.

Whatever might be said, it was certain that Ten-Ichi was not afraid of the man; that he meant to attack him; and Nick stood still and watched when he reached the open door; watched and made himself ready so that he could render aid at any instant.

Ten-Ichi's motions suggested those of a cat which creeps upon an unwary bird to catch and devour it; and he moved so slowly and so regularly that he could not be seen to move at all, save that the distance between him and the man he intended to attack decreased with each second that passed.

And Nick knew that in another second the young assistant would make the leap. He was curious to see how it would come out, and how the stranger whom he now had no doubt was Zanabayah in person, while that other man in the hotel had been an impostor, would meet this attack; for it looked like an open fight.

And then Nick realized that Ten-Ichi was tightening his muscles ready for the leap.

And then he made it.

The transition from inaction to violent motion was as startling as it was real.

Ten-Ichi alighted fairly upon the shoulders of the man. His lithe arms hooked about the fellow's neck. His wiry legs wound around him and pressed into him like the hugging of a bear; and he worked himself around almost instantly, so that somehow he got his crooked elbow underneath the chin of the man, and then he bent his head backward and still backward until it seemed as if his spine must snap where it was jointed at the nape of the neck.

There was a gurgling cry from the man who was attacked. For one instant only he struggled—and then he collapsed upon the floor in a heap, and Ten-Ichi slowly rose to his feet and looked down upon him with lofty disdain.

He turned quietly then to Nick; for it appeared that he had been conscious of the detective's presence.

"I have given him the Samauri strangle," he said quietly. "Now he cannot breathe. In less than three minutes he will be dead. Shall I save his life?"

For just one instant only Nick hesitated. Who could blame him for that, since he had in mind only the welfare of Idayah and her child? But then he answered, "Yes."

An hour later Zanabayah was taken to police headquarters and placed in solitary confinement, with three men to guard him; and one of those three was Ten-Ichi, by his own request.

And up at Nick Carter's house Starbuck was brought back to his senses, and the others, who had been shocked by that vitic force, shortly recovered and were as well as ever; and at the police-station, to which the other prisoner had been taken, Zanabayah's assistant still nursed his wound in solitude.

Against Zanabayah Nick made the charge of attempted murder, believing that he could prove it; and he said to Idayah, when he returned to the house:

"A few years in an American prison will do him good, I think. He will not depend so securely upon his vitic force after that."

THE END.

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GRAND LETTER COMPETITION

$100 in Gold Awarded for the Best Letters from Readers of

ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY

Every one of the 50,000 boys who read the excellent stories of Western adventure published in the **Rough Rider Weekly,** has some special reason for liking them. Now, we intend to make it worth the while of every boy to tell us just what he thinks about the **Rough Rider Weekly** and hereby offer valuable prizes to those who write us the best letters regarding the stories themselves; how you may have worked to increase their circulation or what you know about the fascinating life of the modern ranchman, so ably described by our cowboy author, Mr. Ned Taylor. This competition is open freely to all who may desire to enter it, without charge or consideration of any kind. It is not necessary for competitors to be subscribers for **Rough Rider** in order to be eligible to compete.

Every contestant who does not win one of the cash prizes will receive a consolation prize.

The first competition opened October 1st, 1906, and closes April 1st, 1907, when a second contest will begin. The prize winners will be listed in April so that every one who reads the **Rough Rider Weekly** may know who has won. Here are the prizes:

$20.00 in Gold for the Best Letter.
$10.00 in Gold for Each of the Three Next Best Letters.
$5.00 in Gold for Each of the Six Next Best Letters.
$2.00 in Gold for Each of the Ten Next Best Letters.

The letters should not be longer than 250 words and should be plainly addressed to Manager of Rough Rider Letter Competition, care of Street & Smith. Now, boys, jump right in and make an effort to win a cash prize.

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